



The Brookdale Foundation



NORTH CAROLINA



A State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children

October 2003

Across the United States, more than 6 million children are being raised in households headed by grandparents and other relatives as parents struggle with substance abuse, mental illness, incarceration, economic hardship, divorce, domestic violence, and other serious problems. These family members (or “kinship caregivers”) are caring for children both inside and outside the foster care system. This fact sheet provides information and resources to help with the challenges they face.

National and State Data*

The Children

- Nationally, 4.5 million children are living in grandparent-headed households (6.3% of all children under age 18). This represents a 30% increase from 1990 to 2000.
- There are another 1.5 million children in the United States who are living in households headed by other relatives (2.1% of all children under 18).
- In North Carolina, there are 135,158 children living in grandparent-headed households (6.9% of all the children in the state). There are another 39,043 children living in households headed by other relatives (2.0% of all the children in the state).

The Grandparents

- Nationally, 2.4 million grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them: 29% of these grandparents are African American; 17% are Hispanic/Latino; 2% are American Indian or Alaskan Native; 3% are Asian; and 47% are White. 34% of these grandparents live in households without the children’s parents present. 71% are under the age of 60; 19% live in poverty.
- In North Carolina, 79,810 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them [5,175 in Charlotte]: 47% of these grandparents are African American; 2% are Hispanic/Latino; 2% are American Indian or Alaskan Native; and 47% are White. 43% of these grandparents live in households without the children’s parents present.

Additional Information

- United States Census data on grandparents who are responsible for meeting the basic needs of their grandchildren can also be broken down by county, congressional district, and other categories. Log on to <http://factfinder.census.gov>. Additional data on grandparents and grandchildren are available at www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/grandparents.html.
- Additional national and state data on grandparents raising children is available on AARP’s website at www.aarp.org/confacts/grandparents/census2000.html.

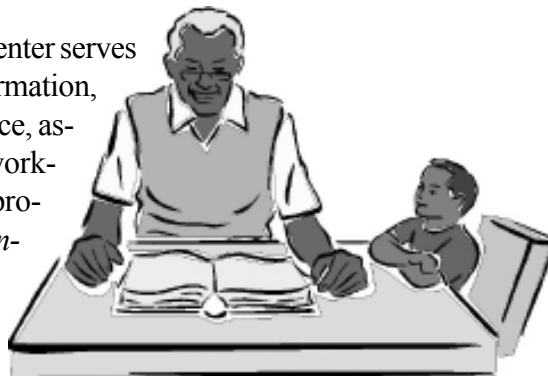
* These data are taken from the U.S. Census Bureau Table DP-2. Profile Selected Social Characteristics:2000.

Programs That Can Help

- **Grandparent Raising Grandchildren Educational Program** manual, a free newsletter *Parenting Grandchildren*, and other publications. *Contact:* Suzanne LaFollette-Cameron, Associate State Director, at (919)508-0269 or scameron@aarp.org.
- **Statewide Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) Grant:** In 1997, North Carolina became one of the first states to receive a grant from the Brookdale Foundation's Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) to initiate a statewide task force, interagency collaborations, and development of local support groups. North Carolina Cooperative Extension has joined the North Carolina Division of Aging, and is now a partner in the RAPP initiative. *Contact:* Dr. Luci Bearon, Adult Development/Aging Specialist, at (919) 515-9146 or luci_bearon@ncsu.edu.
- **The North Carolina Division of Aging** has encouraged the development of kinship care support groups and is working with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension and other organizations to create a network of these groups across the state. Information on support groups can be obtained at the Division of Aging's website at www.dhhs.state.nc.us/aging/.
- **The Senior Resources of Guilford's National Family Caregiver Program** offers support groups in Greensboro and High Point for kinship caregivers.
- **YWCA of Greensboro** sponsors a Lunch and Learn Series every 2nd Thursday of each month that features guest speakers. There are also support groups offered every 3rd Tuesday of each month, made possible through a grant from the Brookdale Foundation, that feature guest speakers, dinners, and activities for the children during the meetings. *Contact:* Chanda Hurms, Foster Grandparent Program Director, Senior Resources of Guilford, at (336) 373-4816, ext. 231, or fgp@senior-resources-guilford.org.
- **YWCA of High Point** also offers a Lunch and Learn series on the 2nd Tuesday of each month. *Contact:* Donna Duffy, Community Outreach Coordinator, at (336) 273-3461 ext. 109. In addition, there is a support group every 3rd Thursday of each month, that covers topics presented at the Lunch and Learns, and allows grandparents to network and discuss issues relevant to their situations. *Contact:* Tee Taylor, Women's Services Director, at (336) 882-4126, or ttaylor@ywcahp.com.
- **The Grandchildren-Grandparents Rights of North Carolina** offers a support group on the first Saturday of each month at 11:00 a.m. Grandparent caregivers get together to network and discuss issues relevant to their care giving needs, and obtain information regarding available services in their state and local areas. *Contact:* Carol McRoberts, President, at (336) 685-5124, or Mmcroberts@prodigy.net.
- **The Relatives as Parents Program** holds monthly group meetings that will provide opportunity for discussions on educational components around issues relevant to relatives who are parenting. Supportive and social components are also provided. *Contact:* Evelyn Hardy, Adoption Supervisor, Forsyth County Department of Social Services, (336) 727-2023, or hardyem@genius.co.forsyth.nc.us.
- **Regional Area Agencies on Aging** have initiated services, including information and assistance, support groups, caregiver training and counseling, respite and supplemental services for kinship care families. *Contact:* Christine Urso, Family Caregiver Support Program Specialist, at (919) 733-3983 or visit the Division of Aging website at www.dhhs.state.nc.us/aging/.
- **The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Aging**, has compiled a comprehensive resource guide for grandparents caring for their grandchildren. *Raising the Generations: A Resource Guide for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren* will be available in the beginning of 2004. *Contact:* Lynne Berry, Legal Services Developer, at (919) 733-8395 or Lynne.Berry@ncmail.net.



- **The Grandparenting Program** at Winston-Salem State University offers many services for grandparents raising their grandchildren. The program offers direct health, social, and case management services, and also provides referrals to connect caregivers to quality child care services, after school care, and other caregiver needs. The Grandparenting Program offers individualized plans of developmental assessments, and has received funding from the Kellogg Foundation to implement a program addressing school readiness for children between the ages of birth and 7 years old. *Contact:* Dr. Lenora Campbell, at (336) 750-2577, or campbellr@wssu.edu.
- **The North Carolina Cooperative Extension** provides workshops and programs for grandparents and other relatives raising children and the professionals who serve them. *Contact:* Dr. Luci Bearon, Adult Development/ Aging Specialist, at (919) 515-9146 or luci_bearon@ncsu.edu. The CARES Program of the UNC School of Social Work in Chapel Hill also provides educational services to professionals who work with kinship care families. *Contact:* Gary Nelson, Director, at (919) 962-0650 or gmnelson@email.unc.edu. You can also access the program's web site at <http://ssw.unc.edu/cares/cares/htm>.
- **The GrandCare Program** at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Senior Center serves more than 200 grandparent families. The program provides information, referrals, support groups, respite services, court-related assistance, assistance with necessary social and other services, educational workshops for grandparents and other relatives raising children and professionals, and community coalition-building and education. *Contact:* Sue Korenstein, GrandCare Director, at (704) 522-6222, ext. 106 or grandcare@earthlink.net.



Children in Foster Care

Sometimes state child welfare agencies place children in foster care with grandparents or other relatives. Most state agencies call these placements “kinship care.” In North Carolina, the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services (DSS) reports:

Number of children in kinship care: In 2000, of the 5,141 children who entered out-of-home placements under DSS custody, 964 (18.8%) were placed with extended family or kin.

Preferences for kinship care: The Division of Social Services Manual states that “when children cannot be assured safety in their own homes, the best alternative resource can often be found within the extended family and other kin.” Additionally, the juvenile court supervising the child’s case is required to ascertain whether or not a relative is willing and able to provide proper care and supervision for the child.

Kinship care licensing: There is no separate licensing program for kinship foster parents. Kin have to meet the same licensing standards and training requirements and receive the same foster care payment rate as non-kin foster parents. However, DSS may apply for a waiver of some requirements of kin foster homes that do not affect the health and safety of the child.

Subsidized guardianship programs: In addition to foster care payments and other benefits available to kin raising children in the foster care system, some states also have subsidized guardianship programs. Under its Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration Project, North Carolina has been able to offer a subsidized guardianship program that provides subsidies (in the 19 eligible counties) for eligible children who have been in DSS custody for 12 months and have resided with the prospective legal guardian for a least six months. To be eligible for the program, reunification and adoption must be ruled out as an option for the child. DSS also carefully assesses the relationship between the caregiver and the child to determine if the relationship is nurturing and stable. *Contact:* Sandra F. Sink, Title IV-E Waiver Project Coordinator, at (919) 733-5125 or sandra.sink@ncmail.net.

State kinship care contact: Questions about kinship foster placements should be directed to David Atkinson at (919) 733-7831 ext. 280, or David.Atkinson@ncmail.net.

Training and Support for Kinship foster parents: The North Carolina State Foster Parent Association plays a significant role in the training and support of kinship foster parents, including helping DSS to recruit and retain foster parents and provide guidance on their training needs.

Public Benefits

Children are often eligible for state and federal benefits even if their caregivers do not have legal guardianship or custody. These programs include:

Financial Assistance: Cash assistance may be available to children and their grandparents and other relative caregivers through North Carolina's Work First program.

- A "child-only grant" is for the child and based *only* on the child's income.
- An adult caregiver may also be included in the grant — based on their income and subject to work requirements and time limits.

Call (919) 733-7831, visit the website at www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/index.htm, or contact your local county department of social services.

Food Stamps: Kinship care families may also be eligible for food stamps to help meet their children's food and nutrition needs. For more information, call (919) 733-7831, visit the website at www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/index.htm, or contact your local county department of social services.

Health Insurance: Grandparents and other relative caregivers may apply for free or low-cost health insurance on behalf of the children they are raising through the North Carolina Health Check and Health Choice for Children programs. In some cases, caregivers may also be eligible for free health coverage under Medicaid. Contact Health Check at (919) 857-4019 or visit the website at www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dma/cpcont.htm.

Other Benefits: Other state and federal benefits may also be available to eligible children, such as child care subsidies, disability benefits, and special education services. For more information about these, download CDF's benefit guides for grandparents and other relatives raising children at www.childrensdefense.org or call (202) 662-3568. For more information on the federal benefits that may be available to caregivers, log on to the National Council on Aging's Benefits CheckUp website at www.benefitscheckup.org.

State Laws

The following state laws may be helpful to grandparents and other relatives raising children¹:

Medical Consent (N.C. Gen. Stat. § 32A - 34): This law allows a custodial parent or other legal custodian to authorize another "adult in whose care the minor child has been living" to consent to health care for a child through the use of a notarized consent form.

Educational Consent (N.C. Gen. Stat. § 115C - 366): This law allows an adult who is raising a child without legal custody or guardianship to enroll that child in the school district where that adult lives.

Standby Guardianship (N.C. Gen. Stat. § 35A - 1370 et seq.): This law states that a parent or legal guardian of a minor may designate, in writing or by petition to the court, a stand-by guardian to become legally responsible for

the minor in the event of the parent or legal guardian's terminal illness, debilitating illness, or future incapacitation. State contact for legal information related to kinship care in North Carolina: Lynne Berry, NC Division of Aging, Legal Services Developer, at (919) 733-8395 or Lynne.berry@ncmail.net.

'Laws change and are subject to different interpretations. These general descriptions are not intended as legal advice in any particular situation.

National Resources

AARP Grandparent Information Center	(800) 424-3410	www.aarp.org/grandparents
Adoption Information Clearinghouse	(888) 251-0075	www.calib.com/naic/pubs/r_grand.cfm
The Brookdale Foundation Group	(212) 308-7355	www.brookdalefoundation.org
Child Welfare League of America	(202) 638-2952	www.cwla.org
Children's Defense Fund	(202) 628-8787	www.childrensdefense.org
Generations United	(202) 638-1263	www.gu.org
Grand Parent Again		www.grandparentagain.com
GrandsPlace	(860) 763-5789	www.grandsplace.com
National Aging Information Center	(202) 619-0724	www.aoa.dhhs.gov
National Committee of Grandparents for Children's Rights	(866) 624-9900	www.grandparentsforchildren.org
The Urban Institute	(202) 833-7200	www.urban.org

Fact sheets are updated once a year. Suggested additions should be emailed to the AARP Grandparent Information Center at gic@aarp.org. Please write "State Fact Sheets" in the subject line of your email.